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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [AF](#)
SUBJECT: NEW AFGHAN CABINET NOMINEES

REF: A. KABUL 47
[1](#)B. KABUL 62

Classified By: PolCouns Annie Pforzheimer reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

[1](#)1. (C) Summary: The Afghan Lower House (Wolesi Jirga, WJ) received President Karzai's list of 16 cabinet nominations on January 9; there were no repeated names from the last list with a slate primarily comprised of political unknowns. This new list appears to be Karzai's attempt to balance pragmatic deals with influential MPs with his promises to nominate new faces that have the right educational credentials (if not actual relevant experience). However, many MPs have told us they are unimpressed and likely to vote down a significant number of these weak "nobodies", claiming that they were selected to be Karzai's puppets and still represent deals made with traditional powerbrokers. Notably, former commander Ismail Khan, the last of the former warlords with a cabinet ministry, was not re-nominated. Women's groups are elated to have obtained three ministerial nominees. End Summary.

[1](#)2. (U) The following cabinet nominees were announced on January 9:

--Foreign Affairs - Zalmay Rassoul
--Justice - Habibullah Ghuleb
--Higher Education - Dr. Muhammad Hashim Hesmatullahee
--Hajj - Dr. Mohammad Yusuf Niazi
--Public Works - Engineer Bashir Lalee
--Public Health - Dr. Suraya Dalil (female)
--Economy - Arghandewal
--Commerce - Mohammad Hadi Hakimi
--Rural Development - Jarullah Mansoori
--Labor, Social Affairs and Martyred - Amena Safi Afzali (female)
--Transportation - Abdul Rahim Orazi
--Women's Affairs - Palwasha Hassan (female)
--Refugee Affairs - Eng. Abdul Rahim
--Tribal and Border Affairs - Arsala Jamal
--Counternarcotics - Zarar Ahmad Moqbel
--Urban Development - Engineer Sultan Hussein Hasari

On January 10:
--Communications - Abdul Qadoos Hamidi

A Third Tranche?

[1](#)3. (C) Second Vice President Khalili, who presented the names to the WJ, lobbied the MPs hard to finish the cabinet approval process before the January 28 London Conference. WJ Speaker Qanooni also noted at the same plenary session the presidential decree calling for extraordinary WJ sessions until the cabinet approval process was over, thereby formalizing the WJ's indefinite extension and underscoring the urgency of the process. Most MPs think the approval process will last from 7 -10 days for this second tranche of

nominees. MP Fawzia Koofi (Tajik, Badakhshan) echoed a common theme when she told us January 11 that a third tranche of nominees was certain, as most of these nominees were considered too weak and unqualified. She said many candidates had connections to traditional powerbrokers, claiming that the Energy and Water Ministry will be given to an individual loyal to Ismail Khan. Ishaq Gailani (Paktika, Pashtun) also told us MPs were already talking about the "third list," claiming this list was the lucky one that would provide candidates with the highest likelihood of passing.

¶4. (C) MP Mohammad Dawood Sultanzoy (Ghazni, Pashtun) told us January 9 that "he had no idea who most of these people were" and that many nominees were "political nobodies" and would not earn the NA's vote of confidence. MP Khalid Pashtun (Pashtun, Kandahar) told us about 30-40% of these candidates would not obtain the NA's approval, making a third tranche likely. MP Helaludin Helal (Tajik, Baghlan) said only five of these candidates would pass, and that Karzai selected these weak individuals so he could control them like "puppets." He claimed those with access to significant financial resources however, like the reported drug mafia-linked counternarcotics minister candidate, could pay off MPs to obtain approval votes.

Winners and Losers

¶5. (C) The political winners of this cabinet nominee list included some powerful factions in the Parliament, probably reflecting Karzai's interest in getting nominees through.

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Some of these groups include: the Hezb-e-Islami Afghanistan party (HIA), MPs from the five central-north Provinces, women, and according to some, former president Professor Rabbani's Jamiat party. HIA obtained two more nominees bringing their total to three. Former presidential candidate Dr. Abdullah's most influential supporter Rabbani now has two of his affiliates nominated (vice none the last time), although Rabbani's son Salahuddin Rabbani says these selections fell short of promises and were meant to "divide Jamiat." Tajik leaders Abdullah, Rabbani, and Marshall Fahim disagree strongly about Tajik nominees and dealings with Karzai. Abdullah refused to participate in Karzai's government, despite an offer to become the Foreign Minister made January 6, according to MP and Abdullah-supporter Ishaq Gailani. Contrarily, Rabbani wants stronger Tajiks candidates who are closer to him, while Marshal Fahim prefers candidates who reflect his close Karzai relationship.

¶6. (C) MPs from the central North also obtained three slots after they joined forces to vote against many of Karzai's first tranche of candidates on the grounds that they had no geographic representation in the cabinet. Females make up outspoken member of the previous cabinet. However, he is likely to perform about as well as the incumbent. He speaks Pashtu, Dari, English, French, Italian and Arabic.

--Justice - Habibullah Ghuleb. Tajik. He was nominated by the infamous Northern Alliance warlord MP Ustad Abdurab Rasoul Sayyaf, and his Islamic Call Political Party. Parwan. PhD in Sharia Law. He was nominated for the 9th Supreme Court Justice slot in 2006, but Parliament rejected his nomination. However, conservatives in Parliament remain one of the most powerful voting blocks. Many MPs claimed his performance at his approval hearing January 11 was dismal; when asked about his strategy for the Justice Ministry, he responded that it was Karzai's responsibility to provide him with a strategy, and therefore he had no strategy. The MPs laughed at Ghuleb's answers on several occasions.

--Higher Education - Dr. Muhammad Hashim Hesmatullahee. Kazilbash. Many MPs allege he was nominated by the Iranians;

in the past he has helped MPs with Iranian visas. Shia.
Kabul. BA in Literature from the Kabul University, MA from

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Tehran's Tabatabai University in Journalism. He has been a lecturer at the Journalism Department at the Kabul University since 2004, and served as the head of the Union of Afghan Journalists. He speaks Dari, Pashtu and English.

--Hajj and Religious Affairs - Dr. Mohammad Yusuf Niazi. Pashtun. Sayyaf's Islamic Call Party. Nangarhar. PhD in Islamic Studies. He worked in the Justice sector during the time of the former King Zahir Shah.

--Public Works - Engineer Bashir Lalee. Hazara. He was supported by Khalili and Mohaqeq. Bachelors in Construction. Ghazni. His father was a former Minister of Mines under Zahir Shah.

--Public Health - Dr. Suraya Dalil. Female. Uzbek. Former warlord General Dostum and the Junbesh Political Party. Jowzjan. She obtained her MA from Harvard in Public Health in 2003, and is particularly dedicated to maternal health issues. She used to work with UNICEF, Doctors Without Borders, and the International Organization for Migration. Former Health Minister Fatimie held a negative assessment of Dalil, telling us that she, "has no familiarity with the MoPH policies and strategies, and her nomination would cause unfavorable and harsh consequences on the health sector."

--Economy - Haji Abdul Hadi Arghandewal. Pashtun. He is the head of the Hezb-e-Islami Afghanistan Party (HIA). BA in Economics. He is also currently one of Karzai's Tribal Advisors. His exposure to the West -- he lived in the U.S. for a few years and still has family in California -- has made him a notable moderate on economic and social issues in a party whose membership gravitates to conservative Islamic beliefs. He was Gulbuddin Hekmatyar's financial officer for much of the 1980s. He has modernized the party and renounced the use of violence, and broke with Hekmatyar in the late 1990s. However, many in the party base remains predominantly loyal to Hekmatyar, and he no doubt remains in some contact with him. He is perhaps the best face that HIA could put forward. He speaks Dari, Pashtu and English.

--Commerce - Mohammad Hadi Hakimi. Hazara. He is associated with influential Hazara former warlord Haji Mohammad Mohaqeq and his branch of the Wahdat party. Ghazni. He received his Law Degree in Canada and his BA in International Commerce in Iran. He refused his nomination, however, on January 11 citing family issues. MPs claimed to us that in addition to his worries about losing his Canadian citizenship, he did not want to become a weak minister with two masters, Karzai and Mohaqeq.

--Rural Development - Jarullah Mansoori. Tajik. He is associated with influential MP Professor Burhanuddin Rabbani and his Jamiat party according to many MPs, but Rabbani's son Salahuddin told us January 11 that he is a candidate of Marshal Fahim. Badakhshan. MA in Political Science. Former Deputy Director in the Afghan Environmental Agency. He comes from a religious family that some local staff consider fundamentalist. The Canadian Embassy is verifying whether or not he is a citizen.

--Labor, Social Affairs and Martyred - Amena Safi Afzali. Female. Tajik. Rumored to be associated with Rabbani's Jamiat Party, associated with Fahim Khan and Rabbani. Herat. BA in Biology from Kabul University. She was a delegate at the constitutional Loya Jirga. Member of Afghan Independent Human Rights Commission. She taught Biology at Kabul University, and fled to Iran during the Russian invasion. Her husband, a well-known jihadi fighter, was killed by the Russians.

--Transportation - Abdul Rahim Ouras. Turkman. Former

warlord General Dostum and the Junbesh Political Party. Faryab. Phd in Construction. No one in the Transportation Ministry appears to know him, and neither do their contacts, including the Acting Minister of Transport Alami. Many MPs told us he performed poorly during the question and answer period of his approval hearing January 11. Other MPs told us he has good work experience, but it will be difficult for him to overcome the Dostum stigma and obtain enough MP votes.

--Women's Affairs - Palwasha Hassan. Female. Pashtun. Some think she is associated with Pir Gailani. Kabul. Bachelor of Science from a University in Pakistan. MA in Post Conflict Recovery from the York University in the UK. She established the Afghan Women's Education Center, and co-founded the Afghan Women's Network. The Embassy considers her a very good selection -- the United States Institute of Peace highly recommends her. She speaks Pashtu, Dari, Urdu and English.

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--Refugee Affairs - Eng. Abdul Rahim. Tajik. He is associated with Marshal Fahim and influential MP Professor Burhanuddin Rabbani and his Jamiat party, although Rabbani no longer supports Rahim's candidacy according to Rabbani's son and several Tajik MPs close to Jamiat. This has caused Rahim to reconsider his candidacy, for fear that without Rabbani he will not get enough votes. Badakhshan. BA in Engineering from the Kabul-based Polytechnic University. He served as a representative of Jamiat for 10 years with assignments in China, Washington, and Islamabad, under Rabbani. He has also served as Afghanistan's Ambassador to Indonesia. Most criticize this selection, since he has no relevant background, but instead has an affiliation with traditional Afghan powerbrokers and former commanders. MP Helal claimed that when Rahim was the first Commerce Minister in Karzai's government, he was removed due to corruption allegations. He speaks Dari, Pashtu and English.

--Tribal and Border Affairs - Arsala Jamal. Pashtun. Hezb-e-Islami Afghanistan. Khost. Bachelor of Economics from the University of Malaya. He served as the Khost Governor from 2006 - 2008, but resigned and moved back to Canada in 2008 after the at least six assassination attempts. Canadian citizen. He was an active member of Karzai's campaign team. He previously served as Chief Program Coordinator for Water and Sanitation at the Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation and Development. He appears to have been a competent governor, although there were some uncorroborated rumors of corruption. He speaks Pashtu, Dari and English.

--Counternarcotics - Zarar Ahmad Moqbel. Tajik. Associated with First Vice President and former warlord Marshal Fahim. Parwan. BA in Education from Parwan University, although many express doubt that he completed his degree. Former Minister of Interior. He was removed from office due to his reputation for ineffectiveness and allegations of corruption, according to ISAF. He is perhaps the worst of the candidates. Former Deputy Interior Minister and MP Helaludin Helal claimed to us January 11 that Moqbel was supported by the drug mafia, to include Karzai's younger half-brother Ahmed Wali Karzai and Arif Khan Noorzai. He joined the jihad against the Soviets in 1988, and later served as the Kabul police chief; he also worked at Afghanistan's Embassy in Tehran. He speaks Dari, Pashtu and English.

--Urban Development - Engineer Sultan Hussein Hasari. Hazara. Associated with Second Vice President Khalili and his branch of the Wahdat party. Wardak. Bachelor of Science in Architecture from the Iran National University. He resettled in Denmark and started PhD studies in Aalborg. A member of the Association of Academic Architects and the Federation of Danish Architects, he has worked on projects in Iran and Afghanistan; he has also been a visiting lecturer in these countries.

--Communications - Abdul Qadoos Hamidi. His nomination was announced on January 10. Jowzjan. Dostum and the Junbesh party. He has a Bachelors and Masters Degree from Kabul University in communications and technology. He was the Deputy Minister of Mines, and lectured at the Information Institute in Pakistan and Balkh University.

Jihadi Credentials Still Featured

¶10. (C) Afghan society and the WJ still places a significant value on what the candidates did during the war years, including if they fought and if they were in exile. What biographic information the cabinet nominees and the Karzai government has decided to give to the Parliament underscores this. The Health Minister's biographic statement includes notes that her husband died "fighting the soviets." The Counternarcotics nominee "joined the jihad against the USSR in 1988," and Public Health Minister Soraya Dalil's bio states that, "despite civil war, she remained in Afghanistan for much of the 1990s" and "soon after the Taleban government emerged, she shifted to neighboring Pakistan with her family."

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